

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. I am deeply concerned not only that media consolidation is happening at such a rapid rate, and across various media, but also that these large companies are not even attempting objective or balanced coverage--in this case in relation to a critical political campaign. As stewards of our airwaves, the responsibility of a communications outlet like Sinclair is to reflect society and its multiple viewpoints as they exist both locally and nationally, not just to promote a singular viewpoint tailored to a particular corporate agenda. The greater the power, the greater the need to consider the terms and explicit limits of that power. Furthermore, moves like Sinclair's subvert the public interest when they continue to give the appearance of supporting a diversity of voices (via the existence of multiple, localized media outlets) while actually mandating a centralized, homogeneous agenda behind the scenes. The FCC allowing this to happen does a disservice to the American people, whose rights to free speech are being quietly co-opted, even as the sheer volume of channels, niche markets, and media options falsely implies that multiple voices must inevitably be heard.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.